

THE  
LOGIC OF LOURDES

REV. JOHN J. CLIFFORD, S.J.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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I.	Zola and Marie Lebranchu.....	5
II.	The Lourdes Medical Bureau.....	10
III.	Facts, Not Fakes.....	19
IV.	Nature Cures Slowly.....	25
V.	How Nature Cures a Lesion.....	29
VI.	By No Natural Agency.....	37
VII.	Science-Proof Miracles.....	43
VIII.	The Immaculate Conception.....	51
IX.	Proof of an Infallible Church.....	56
X.	God's Testimony to His Church.....	64



## CHAPTER I.

## Zola and Marie Lebranchu

**M**R. BROWN is an up-to-date man. There is a snap to that remark which carries a compliment of its own. Were some one to say the same of us it would ring pleasantly in our ear. Now why should this be so? Well we wish, each and every one of us, to be up to date and the last thing we care to hear said of us is that we are out of step with the times. We take a pride in being well posted. We make it a point to keep step with the march of events. We give a ready ear to the latest news. The final edition of our favorite daily becomes a hobby with us. In a word we are hungry for information and that keenness for information is what keeps us up to date.

Whatever man is interested in has its appeal—provided it is newsy. We slip up of course on some important news. But that is because the information has not been given due publicity, not because we are lacking in interest. Now there is an important item of news that many of us have never heard of and I am going to tell it in these pages, because above all, it is newsy and then, forsooth, because it merits a heaping measure of publicity.

To begin with, in France, along the Southern Railway's line, there is a wee town called Lourdes. Despite its weeness, despite its resemblance to the far-famed puss in the corner, for it is hidden away in an angle

of the Pyrenees, the Railroad Company startles us with the announcement, that over a million travelers visit it every year. We may wonder why? Suppose the news boys came rushing down our streets and shrilled at the top of their voices: "Extra! Extra! A Million People Visit Lourdes." Out would come our pennies in exchange for the extra. Nor would we stop with reading the screaming headlines. We would devour the last scrap of information that found itself beneath the flaring caption: "Startling cures are reported at Lourdes, a small town in the Pyrenees. M. Zola, the well-known novelist, realistically describes the cure of Marie Lebranchu, a consumptive patient."

M. Zola thus pictures the patient prior to her cure:

In the adjoining compartment, Marie Lebranchu, hitherto stretched out, scarce breathing, like a corpse, had just raised herself up; she was a tall, slipshod, singular looking creature of over thirty, with a round ravaged face, which her fuzzy hair and flaming eyes rendered almost pretty. She had reached the third stage of consumption. For five years past she had been making the rounds of the hospitals of Paris, and she familiarly spoke of all the great doctors.

"They say that I have one lung done for, and that the other is scarcely any better. There are great big holes, you know. At first, I only felt bad between the shoulders and spat up some froth. But then I got thin, and became a dreadful sight. And I'm always in a sweat and cough till I think, I'm going to bring my heart up, and I can no longer spit. And I haven't strength to stand. You see I can't eat." A stifling sensation made her pause and she became livid.<sup>1</sup>

This is the picture of Marie Lebranchu painted on her coming to Lourdes, on the twentieth day of August, 1892.

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<sup>1</sup> "Lourdes," English translation, p. 11.

The very same day she bathed in the waters from the spring in the grotto. What happened? M. Zola was at the Medical Office of Lourdes, when the patient presented herself shortly afterwards. He says:

All at once the office was turned fairly topsy-turvy by the arrival of La Grivotte [M. Zola's name for Marie] who swept in like a whirlwind almost dancing with delight and shouting in a full voice, "I am cured, I am cured."

And forthwith she began to relate that they had first of all refused to bathe her, and she had been obliged to insist and beg and sob in order to prevail upon them to do so. And then it had all happened as she had previously said it would. She had not been immersed in the icy water for three minutes—all perspiring as she was, with her consumptive rattle, before she had felt strength returning to her like a whip stroke lashing her whole body. And now a flaming excitement possessed her; radiant, stamping her feet, she was unable to keep still. "I am cured, I am cured."

Was this the same girl, whom on the previous night, he had seen lying on the carriage seat, coughing and spitting blood, with her face of ashen hue? He could not recognize her as she now stood there, erect and slender, her cheeks rosy, her eyes sparkling, and buoyed up by a determination to live, a joy in living already.<sup>2</sup>

These are facts, facts that constitute information worth having. M. Zola saw the girl before her bath in the Lourdes' waters and saw her after that bath. The two pen-pictures of her, one before the bath, the other after the bath, are both faithful to facts. Eye-witnesses of the cure might be cited in numbers to confirm M. Zola's account. But there is a sequel of the cure to which I would rather hurry, as it lends piquancy to the reading.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

On the return trip, as the train drew near Bordeaux, M. Zola has this dramatic incident occur:

Sister Hyacinthe turned quickly and caught La Grivotte in her arms. A frightful fit of coughing however, prostrated the unhappy creature upon the seat and for five minutes she continued stifling, shaken by such an attack that her poor body seemed to be cracking and rending. Then a red thread oozed from between her lips and at last she spat up blood by the throatful. Her ailment had returned to her with brutal force, victorious over everything.<sup>3</sup>

Dramatic indeed, but a lie made out of whole cloth. The facts are quite the reverse. A year later the girl journeyed back to the Grotto, to return thanks for her cure. She presented herself at the Medical Office. The following is the official report:

After a first bath in the piscina (last year) Marie Lebranchu felt suddenly well. At the examination made at the Medical Office with the greatest care, no trace could be found of the serious disease from which she had suffered. Since then the cure has been permanent in spite of an attack of influenza from which the patient suffered during the winter.<sup>4</sup>

In reply to the question: "Well, did M. Zola go to see you in Paris?" as he had promised, the girl said: "Oh dear no! He never came once. And in his novel, he makes me have a fearful relapse in the train and sends me to the hospital to die."<sup>5</sup>

When Dr. Boissarie, President of the Medical Bureau, took M. Zola to task for this lie, upbraiding him in these terms, "How did you dare to make Marie Lebranchu

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>4</sup> "Annals de Notre Dame de Lourdes," Vol. XXVI., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> "Lourdes," Bertrin, p. 243.

die? You know very well that she is as well as you or I." M. Zola replied, "What has that got to do with me? My characters are my own. I can treat them as I like. I can make them live or die as I please. All I have to consider is the interest of my plot."<sup>a</sup>

A pertinent question at this point would be, why have I chosen to mention this particular cure with its strange sequel? First, it serves to awaken interest in Lourdes and then it points withal the lengths to which the opponents of Lourdes will go, to discredit the cures wrought therein. But above and beyond all this, it avails to emphasize the work of the Medical Bureau, to which the following chapter will be devoted.

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<sup>a</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER II.

# The Lourdes Medical Bureau

SOME fakes provoke a smile of amusement. When we are out for relaxation, we laugh at the fellow who fools us and we enjoy the art that tricks us. We know we are being practised upon and look indulgently upon it. But let the least tinge of a fake appear in the serious matters of life and we are up in arms and denounce it. Rightly so. The fake philanthropist, we despise; the fake physician, we imprison; the fake religion, we abhor. These exploit the people, bartering for filthy lucre, the sacred inheritance of man. Here then we have the right, not to say the duty, of putting the question—is Lourdes a fake?

Each year thousands of sick come to Lourdes. It is the gathering place for the afflicted. Viewed from a medical standpoint, there is no better clinic in the world than Lourdes. For here meet in misery all afflictions that can burden our humanity. Lourdes has said to suffering, abide with me, and suffering now is always with her. A place of suffering, Lourdes, that small village hidden away in the Pyrenees. Each incoming train brings its sufferers, but each outgoing train carries away its cured. For we are told that at Lourdes "the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk." Are these cures fakes?

A consumptive is dipped in the chill waters of Lourdes and he emerges cured; the water touches the eyes of a



blind man, and he sees; a short leg, due to the cutting off of diseased bone, is bathed in the piscina and restored to its normal length. These are some of the things happening at Lourdes. Are they fakes? Common-sense plus common experience must reckon with a factor little heard of, in connection with Lourdes, namely its Medical Bureau.

For a number of years, wonderful cures had been taking place at Lourdes, by simply bathing people in the waters issuing from the Grotto. In the publicity given to these cures, it was but natural, that the cry "fake" should be raised. The cures were so marvelous, the methods so crude, that scientific and unscientific minds stood aghast. There must be some fake was the silent if not the spoken comment. This cry of "fake" was voiced in the newspaper legends of Lourdes, which according to Hilaire Belloc runs somewhat after this fashion:

A number of people frequent a town in the Pyrenees, where under the influence of strong emotion, there are produced certain effects upon them such as strong emotion will produce; the nervous are less nervous; the stammerer and the twitching recover control and in general, men and women, under the influence of a violent emotion, discover aptitudes abnormal to their daily powers, just as they will discover such abnormal aptitudes under any other great strain or shock. This superstition is fostered by those who can profit by it.\*

Now the question arose, how to meet and refute this charge of fake. The answer was the Medical Bureau. A staff of eminent physicians headed by Dr. Boissarie constituted the Medical Bureau. We all know that under the spell of religious fervor and under the excitement

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\* "Lourdes," Jørgensen, p. vi.

engendered by an enthusiastic and prayerful multitude, confidently looking forward to a wonderful cure, there is a large opportunity for self-deception on the part of the sick. Unconsciously, the enthusiasm and confidence of the crowd is communicated to the patients and under the stimulus of this temporary excitement and suggestion, a sick man or woman is liable to declare a cure has been effected, where in reality none has taken place. Hence the necessity of a staff of physicians to verify the cures reported.

Theirs is a cold-blooded, unenthusiastic, scientific examination into the facts of each cure reported to them, with the single purpose of uncovering fake, if fake there is, and establishing truth, where truth there is. That there is absolutely no chance for collusion or a secret understanding between the Medical Bureau and the officials of the Grotto, for the purpose of manufacturing cures and thus deceiving the world under the pretext of scientific investigation and guarantee, will stand forth beyond the possibility of challenge when the fact is stated, that the examination of patients, before and after a cure, is open to all physicians of the world, be these same physicians, Protestants or Catholics, Materialists or Atheists, whether they come with doubt in their hearts or scorn on their lips, or with the avowed purpose of exposing, what they preconceive to be a fake. All are welcome, all have free access to the Medical Bureau, to examine, to search, to ask questions of the patients. All is open and above board. The one and only purpose is to get at the truth and nothing but the truth.

Let me quote here, from a letter of Dr. Henry Head, an English Protestant physician, who stayed for some period at Lourdes. Physician that he was, he came well



equipped. There were instruments for ears and eyes, not to mention technical appliances for various examinations, in his well-stocked professional case. Of course, there was the inevitable camera to round out the equipment. Dr. Head, as every other physician who visits Lourdes, was given *carte blanche*. "Do as you like," was his welcome. Accordingly he took part in the discussions, made notes on the proceedings, and personally questioned the patients. On leaving, this Protestant doctor wrote to Dr. Boissarie, the President of the Medical Bureau, as follows:

Above all I should like to thank the authorities of Lourdes, most sincerely, and most cordially, for having granted to me and to other doctors, every facility for free and independent examination. All we have asked for has been generously given us. I shall not fail to make known to all my friends this hospitable welcome and the courtesy with which I, a stranger, have been received. With regard to the Medical Examination of the cures, I am happy to express my complete satisfaction as to the manner in which the certificates of the sick are dealt with. Nothing can exceed the conscientious care with which the value of each certificate is weighed.<sup>†</sup>

An intimate description of the work-a-day routine of the Medical Bureau may prove of interest. An eyewitness, R. H. Benson thus writes of it:

Now I spent a great deal of my time in the Bureau. I may as well then, sum up once and for all the impressions I received from observing the methods of the doctors. There were all kinds of doctors there continually—Catholics and Freethinkers, old and young, and the cases were

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<sup>†</sup> "Lourdes," Boissarie.

discussed with the utmost freedom. Any could ask questions of the *miraculés* or of the other doctors. The certificates of the sick were read aloud. I may observe, too, that if there were any doubt as to a certificate, if there was question of a merely nervous malady, any *conceivable possibility* of a mistake, the case was dismissed abruptly.\*

Thus for illustration, we present the subsequent case:

The next to enter was Juliette Gosset, aged twenty-five, from Paris. She had been cured during the procession, she said. She showed a certificate dated the previous March, asserting that she suffered gravely from tuberculosis, especially in the right lung; she added herself that hip disease had developed since that time, that one leg had become seven centimeters shorter than the other, and that she had been for some months, unable to sit or to kneel. Yet here she walked and sat without the smallest apparent discomfort.<sup>9</sup>

When she had finished her tale, a doctor pointed out that the certificate said nothing of any hip disease. She assented, explaining the reason; but added that the hospital where she lodged at Lourdes would corroborate what she said. Then she disappeared into a little private room to be examined. Benson thus continues his account:

After a few minutes there returned the doctor who had examined Juliette Gosset. Now I think, it should impress the incredulous that this case was pronounced unsatisfactory and probably will not appear upon the records. It was perfectly true that the girl had had tuberculosis, and that now nothing was to be detected except the very faintest symptom—so faint as to be negligible—in the right lung. It appeared to be true also that she had had hip disease, since there were upon her body certain marks of treatment

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\* "Lourdes," R. H. Benson.      <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

by burning; and that now her legs were of an exactly equal length. But first the certificate was five months old, secondly it made no mention of hip disease; thirdly seven centimeters was almost too large a measure to be believed.<sup>10</sup>

Too much stress, it is convincing to note, cannot be placed upon this meticulous care with which the medical staff verifies a cure. The work of authenticating a cure is characterized by over-caution and super-scrupulousness. For this attitude the reasons are many and cogent. In sponsoring a cure, the doctors must offer as a guarantee, their professional reputation. What physician of standing, it may be asked, would lightly toss away his professional integrity? Then cures occur in such frequency, as to force, by their very number, the minutest scrutiny in order to detect some flaw, by which to exclude them from the official lists. The scientific world is sceptical. A half-dozen authenticated cures might interest it. But to pile marvelous cure upon marvelous cure is to excite the distrust and arouse the antagonism of this sceptical, scientific world. Why then should these doctors admit to the records a doubtful case when there are so many which are absolutely incontestable? And yet, after every effort to discredit marvelous cures has been exhausted, the attending staff must, perforce, lengthen the long lists of authentic cures.

That the lists are lengthened only, one might say, upon compulsion, there is abundant evidence to prove. Writing of the early days of the Medical Bureau, Richard J. Clarke says of the doctor in charge:

If I had been suddenly introduced into the room without any previous acquaintance with him, I should have taken him, from the manner of his examination, for a

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

sceptic, who was determined on finding some natural solution for every case that came before him. Over and over again where it seemed to me no natural means could have produced the sudden change, on my asking his opinion respecting the nature of the malady and the cause of its disappearance, he would answer firmly, "Nervous affection, my dear Sir!" It was a great satisfaction to know that in some respects, he out-Heroded Herod in his sceptical critical spirit and that a case passed by him must carry with it such incontrovertible marks of the miraculous that no intelligent man, unless blinded by invincible prejudice, could refuse to accept it with unhesitating assurance of its truth.<sup>11</sup>

In discussing the work of the Medical Bureau, Mr. George Bertrin uses the words of Dr. Bernheim, known the world over as a specialist in psycho-therapeutics, and adds his own testimony:

The learned Jew (Dr. Bernheim) admits that the sick are really cured in crowds at the Grotto and that the official accounts are authentic. I may add that this is also the opinion of all who personally investigate what goes on at Lourdes. I myself did this. I wished to see and judge for myself. During August and September 1904, I spent long hours and sometimes whole days at the Office. There I met very many invalids who had just been cured. I heard the doctors cross-examine them, I saw reports drawn up, and I formed my own opinions. It is impossible to doubt either the *reality of the most unexpected cures* or the *perfect sincerity of the doctors* who investigate and authenticate them.<sup>12</sup>

By way of contrast we might add a negative testimony and test its worth. In his "Superstition and Witchcraft," Dr. Lehman, a Danish scientist, apropos of Lourdes, remarks: "The recoveries at these places derive their

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<sup>11</sup> "Lourdes," R. J. Clarke, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> "Lourdes," Bertrin, p. 83.

miraculous character chiefly from the fact that no one ever takes the trouble to examine the patients and to determine whether there is really an organic lesion or only a disturbance of the nervous functions." Armed with this opinion, a compatriot of the Danish scientist, Mr. J. Jørgensen, came to Lourdes to see for himself. After days spent at the Medical Bureau, in witnessing the examination of patients and in thorough study of the records, he concludes:

In this accurate observation and record, the contention of a Danish scientist, in regard to Lourdes, finds no justification. I put aside the little sheet of paper on which I have written down, for the purpose of my notes on Lourdes, the unassailable opinion of this Danish scientist about things which he has apparently never taken the trouble to investigate.<sup>18</sup>

This reply, telling as it is, might have been further strengthened, had Mr. Jørgensen deemed it worth while to take up, in detail, the ridiculous contention of Dr. Lehman. For had Dr. Lehman made a personal investigation of the trite charge which so glibly rolls off his tongue, he would have discovered, that nervous ailments, so frequently mentioned in connection with Lourdes, do not form even the one-fourteenth part of the cures officially authenticated.<sup>19</sup> As has been emphasized over and over again in the testimony of those who have personally investigated the methods of the Medical Bureau, the mere possibility of attributing a disease to a "disturbance of the nervous functions" is sufficient to exclude the cure from the official lists. This care on the part of the Medical Staff it was, that led Dr. Ch. Richet,

<sup>18</sup> "Lourdes," Jørgensen, p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> "Catholic Encyclopedia," Vol. IX, p. 390.

chief editor of the *Annales des Physiques*, a sceptical French review, to attest, after a faithful study of the Bureau Records: "On reading it unprejudiced minds cannot but be convinced, that the facts stated are authentic."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER III.

# Facts, Not Fakes

**T**HE purpose of the Medical Bureau at Lourdes is to detect fraud and to protect truth. Its clinical work is open to the physicians of the world for inspection and personal examination. Its decisions rest on attested facts and actual scrutiny of the patients. Its attitude is to deny a cure rather than affirm it has taken place. It has been visited by 4,117 doctors in seventeen years, not one of whom has gone on record in a protest against either the accuracy of the methods employed, or the veracity of the officially reported cures. And let it be emphasized that everything, at Lourdes, is at the disposal of these members of the medical profession. It is their privilege to examine the patients, to scrutinize the certificates of the sick, to probe the records of the office. Indeed, not only physicians, but every writer, every journalist, every man of education who so wishes, has the same right to form his judgment on the most complete personal investigation.

All this has been said to dispel the natural amazement which must arise, on reading the authenticated list of cures, an amazement which might readily lead to doubt, were not the cold facts of the preceding chapter too stubborn and unyielding to allow place for any hesitancy. A partial list of authenticated cures is as follows:

Diseases of digestive organs.....	496
Diseases of the circulatory apparatus.....	87

Lung diseases .....	146
Diseases of the urinary tract.....	47
Diseases of the spinal cord.....	128
Brain diseases .....	464
Bone afflictions .....	112
Joint diseases .....	168
Diseases of the eye.....	138
Diseases of the ear.....	35
Skin diseases.....	36
Uterine diseases .....	68
Tumors .....	102 <sup>10</sup>

My first impression, on reading these authenticated cures, was one of wonder mingled with amazement. "How could it be?" was the question that leaped to my lips. The thoughts that crowded confusedly through my mind and clamored for utterance, kept revolving themselves about this central idea, why was I not told before? Here in a wee village, in an obscure corner of the globe, startling cures were taking place which, if they furnished nothing else, would at least make the greatest copy in the world, for screaming headlines in our daily press. And in place of a scream that would waken a news-hungry world to a vital interest in what is going on at Lourdes, there is not even a whisper to betray the existence of Lourdes, so small in its area, so large in its works.

Yet after all is said, the explanation is so simple. There are still men of the world who will attend services on Sunday. There are still many more who out of curiosity or criticism or conviction, will open the Bible and read therein the wonderful works of Jesus of Nazareth. Carelessly they may peruse the narrative or carefully, yet how strangely, at these times, how singularly far-distant,

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<sup>10</sup> "Lourdes," Bertrin, pp. 293-296.



the miraculous appears. Men gaze at it across the vista of twenty centuries. And that distance seems to dim the vision and cloud the splendor of its occurrence, even to the point of wresting from it the vital spark that should make it live and speak to men of today.

One takes it for granted; one might find a moral in it, a Sunday-school lesson, but it all belongs to the dead. And whatever the faults we discover and castigate in the modern dailies, no one of us has as yet dared to charge them with believing, what is dead is newsy. Such was the confused current of my own thoughts. "Marly was dead, dead as a door nail," popped into my head and out, and in again, until unconsciously the refrain changed into: "Miracles are dead, dead as a door nail, dead as a coffin nail." And with old Scrooge I sat up and pinched myself and cried out "Humbug!" upon it.

But the facts would not be cried down. They crowded about me, clamoring: "Humbug? Fake? Who's the humbug? Who's the fake? You or we?" And closer they came, and to my annoyance, they began to spell in my face: "F-A-C-T-S: Facts, not Fakes!" I was non-plussed; and to my confusion, their leader advanced and charged me: "The tenth century asked the genuineness of a fact to be tested by the ordeal of the sword or fire; and the facts were few that stood the test. The twentieth century demands the ordeal of the test-tube, the laboratory, the clinic; we have stood the trial successfully. Examination, discussion, experiment, at hands that were unfriendly, under eyes that were hostile, by minds that were prejudiced, have proclaimed our genuineness and disclaimed all faking. We have stood the test, your test, then accept us as facts or you're the fake."

And then there flashed upon my mind, that wonderful scene that took place at Lourdes, some years ago. Let us call it the Tableau of Miracles. But that smacks of the stage and its unreality. Of course that is the trouble in writing of Lourdes. One wishes to state merely the plain facts, one wishes to subject them to a cold, critical, impersonal survey; to treat them as bloodless beings; to cut them dead, in a glance that says, "Pray, I haven't the honor of your acquaintance." And all to no purpose. They bob up serenely, pulsating with life, demanding recognition, forcing their acquaintance upon us, whether we wish their company or no. So it is with the facts that follow.

Dr. Boissarie conceived this daring and dramatic scheme. He sent out a call for the *miraculées* and gathered as many as possible in the Luxembourg Circle, in the November of 1893.

They came, men, women and children of diverse ages and circumstances, alike only in the common bond of heartfelt gratitude for the wondrous works of Lourdes. They sat on the platform with Dr. Boissarie and presented an eloquent testimony to the facts of Lourdes, an ocular proof of the genuineness of the cures wrought at Lourdes, the more vivid indeed because it was a living, breathing, human demonstration, that at Lourdes, the blind are made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk.

Suddenly, the voice of Dr. Boissarie breaks the spell, in which this tableau holds all who gazed upon it. He is reading from an open book before him. He rivets attention upon him.

The fourth patient was a slender girl whose face was entirely covered by a black fichu. The veil fell and Marie shuddered with horror. The head looked hideously like a

monster, with its rough hair and round staring eyes. The cartilage of the nose was almost eaten away, the mouth was drawn all on one side by the swollen condition of the upper lip. The whole was a frightfully distorted mass of matter and oozing blood.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Boissarie was reading Zola's realistic description of Elise Roquet. He paused but to say: "Elise Roquet is, as you know, Marie Lemarchand. You have heard what she was like," and he turned to one of the persons on the platform: "Come forward my child, and show the audience what the Blessed Virgin has done for you."

A pale and beautiful girl stepped forward. A thrill ran through the audience and their tears flowed in sympathy with the tears of Marie, who on this occasion, heard for the first time, the horrible description of herself, prior to her cure at Lourdes. Her appearance so sweet and innocent, after the revolting picture that had been presented to their imagination, roused the spectators to loud applause in a generous effort to show her their sympathy and appreciation. Where but fifteen months before, dread disease had marred this girl's face, now not a trace of the disfigurement could be found.

Ten years after this, her physician, Dr. La Neele, wrote to a colleague who had made inquiries with regard to this case: "I saw the invalid immediately on her return. I did not recognize her, so much was she changed. I saw a graceful young girl coming towards me, instead of the mass of humanity, with a horrible and monstrous face, which I had seen ten days previously. The tuberculosis had also disappeared. The cure has lasted."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Lourdes," Fasquelle, pp. 15-16.

<sup>18</sup> "Lourdes," Bertrin, p. 232.

In response to Mr. Bertrin's letter of inquiry, thirteen years after her cure, Marie answered: "The dreadful disease of which I was cured at Lourdes, has never re-appeared. I am house-keeper in a chateau. I have been married six years and have four healthy children. This is what the Blessed Virgin has done for a poor invalid who was given up by the doctors and declared incurable. I should like to say that you have been well informed about my terrible illness and sudden cure. What you say is the exact truth. I was cured instantaneously, not after several baths, but only one."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Lourdes," Bertrin, p. 232.

## CHAPTER IV.

# Nature Cures Slowly

WE are a people who like to have things over and done with in a hurry. "Take your time, sonny," is a phrase under which the American youth chafes, even if it comes from the lips of his father. And yet how often does some mishap engendered of our haste bring home the consciousness, that after all father was right. Now that is rather a bizarre conclusion to reach through a process of shaving. But you see shaving is a tedious operation and we like to have it over and done with, so we race through it. At least I did, with the result pictured in the argot of the tonsor, "I nicked my chin," and while staunching the blood, dolefully repeated, "Father was right. Sonny, you should have taken your time."

Now on the next, let me see, one, two or three occasions, perforce I did take my time. There was a red scar on the spot, to warn me to pass over it gingerly, even at the risk of not lopping off a serried row of bristles. That red scar was Nature's danger signal. It was placed there, as we see danger lights placed in our streets, to remind one that the gas men have left a gash in the streets unmended. There is no need to tell a gas man *qua* gas man, to take his time, I have never met a gas man who finishes a job in a day. But in this he follows Nature. For I have never gashed myself in

shaving and found the cut healed in a day. Nature on such occasions puts out a red scar, to warn us off her unfinished work and there the danger signal stays, till her work of repair is finished.

Somehow I was piqued at the tardiness of Nature's repair work and demanded an explanation. Far from twitting me with the fact, that I wouldn't dare ask the gas man for an explanation of his tardiness, I was handed a primer of physiology instead and found therein a satisfactory reason for delay. All material for repair work, nature must obtain from the blood. Now the blood doesn't simply dump all the material necessary for repair work at the seat of disturbance. The fact is that the blood is in circulation and nature, in common parlance, must take her repair material "on the fly," namely, as the blood is circulating past the injured part.

But in any given quantity of blood, the percentage of repair material present is a very small fraction indeed of the repair material required. Moreover the circulation in the minute blood vessels is necessarily retarded and this slowness of movement calls for a considerable time period, before the blood is able to deliver the required repair material at the seat of disturbance. Accordingly even in very minor cuts, nature is forced to be slow in the matter and manner of healing them.

Here let us glance at another process of natural repair work. We commonly talk of a tubercular patient, as having holes in his lungs. Technically, these holes are named lesions. They result from a destruction of lung tissue; this tissue is eaten away or consumed by germs. Hence we have the term consumptive. If these lesions are to be made whole again, the process, as we all know, is a slow and tedious one. Nature must supply new

tissue. This tissue is built up of individual cells, which consume time both in their formation and arrangement.

Such repair means a repetition, on a small scale, of the process that went on in the formation of a new human being. Biologically, we all start from a single cell; this cell divides to form a second cell; this second cell divides to form other cells. In this manner, the work of cell formation and division ordinarily goes on during nine months, until the infant is prepared by nature for its birth into the world. During this period, tissue was being formed, for the different parts and organs that are found in the make up of man. Whenever any of this tissue is injured or destroyed, the same process of cell-formation and arrangement is repeated. In this process, the time element is always and inevitably an important factor.

Nature then always takes her own precious time in what she does. Fret and fume and complain, we may, but that will never hurry her. In this respect, she is decidedly feminine, as any man, who has had to cool his heels, while his lady was engaged in the process of adorning herself, will forcibly attest. From one view point then, time is no consideration to nature, for she never hurries; yet in another respect, it is all important, for she can accomplish nothing, unless plenty of time is at hand in which to work. And this contrariness may be another reason why we womanize her.

Nature's work then is a time process. "Sudden Jim" is the title of a character who acted on the spur of the moment. "Sudden" is an adjective that can never be applied to nature's cures, she never acts on the spur of the moment..

Accordingly, if there is anything we may call a law of nature, it is this: nature never cures a lesion—that is,

a germ-eaten or destroyed tissue—suddenly. From his own experience, the man in the streets of two thousand years ago, as well as the man in the streets of today, can each one of them vouch without a tremor in his voice: "I know this to be a law of nature. She never cures a lesion suddenly." The pioneer practitioner, gray with the hoar frosts of thousands of years, could step into court and with the most modern and ultra-daring living specialists, swear in truth: "I know this to be a law of nature. She never cures a lesion suddenly." Gather into court statistics from all the clinics in the world and in one voice they will repeat: "We know this to be a law of nature. Nature never cures a lesion suddenly."

And after hearing all this testimony of expert, as well as ordinary observers, I ask: Have you ever known any of your friends or acquaintances to have been cured suddenly? Have you ever heard of a consumptive, for instance, who while suffering from a puncture of the lungs, was cured by nature suddenly, say for example, in one, two or five minutes; or to stretch the word "sudden" more generously, in a half-hour, an hour, or a day? I am forced as well as you to answer an emphatic "No."

And then I go on to inquire, why hasn't nature, in all these years, from the time of Christ to our own, a space of two thousand years, with the increase in the knowledge of doctors, with their skill in advanced technique, and their almost germ-proof hospitals—why hasn't nature, with all these advantages, cured a punctured lung in a moment, an hour, or a day? I ask this question and I find the answer, as you must find it. Nature has not cured a punctured lung in a minute, or an hour, or a day, because nature cannot cure a lesion *suddenly*.



## CHAPTER V.

# How Nature Cures a Lesion

“**N**ATURE hasn’t cured suddenly because she can’t,” is the schoolboy’s way of phrasing an inexorable law. How often this law was used “to point a moral or adorn a tale” is a clear if not a fond memory of school-days long past. Annually teacher brought in a lump of coal; dilated in enthusiastic terms on the numberless years spent in its formation, the energy which was stowed within it, the benefits it brought to mankind and then spoiled it all by saying: “Now children, write a composition on ‘The Story of a Piece of Coal.’”

One such composition I recall. Allowing for some orthographical corrections, the story of a piece of coal was told, in a composition of one paragraph, by the tail-ender of the class, after this fashion: “This piece of coal was once upon a time, a piece of wood, may be oak-wood, because that’s almost as hard as coal. My toad-stabber wont cut oak. It lay underneath the earth, I don’t know how many years. One day a miner dug it up and sold it to our coal dealer who sold it to my father. This piece of coal and a lot more pieces were dumped in front of our house and I had to carry them in. Some job. The reason it takes so long to make coal is, because nature never gets a gait on her.” Of the many corrections made, I remember one distinctly. “William, instead of ‘nature never gets a gait on her,’ you might say, nature never hurries.”

Nature never hurries phrases a law that suffers no exception in the physical or animal kingdoms. For illustration, let us observe, how nature functions in the instance of lesion. Simply stated, the process is this: tissue has been destroyed, new tissue must be made. But how? There is absolutely only one way in which nature can make new tissue and that is, by way of generation. To take in the meaning of this scientific fact in its full force, let us study the repair of a human tissue. It is a process which we are as sure of as we are certain that two and three make five.

Without fear of mistake, then, we can lay down this primal principle, that the replacement of tissue is a biological process similar to that of the first formation of tissue. From the injured surfaces of a lesion, thousands upon thousands of cells grow by segmentation. Thousands upon thousands of cells grow, since a single cell is about  $1/1000$  of a millimeter in size. This cell-growth follows a clearly marked and well-known course of development through successive stages. Each cell when mature divides into other cells, and this divisional function repeats itself ten-thousand times over. Then follows a process of differentiation which need be mentioned only for the time factor involved in it. During the entire course of replacement, tiny blood vessels had to be formed which interpenetrate the new tissue and carry it nutriment. Finally nerve terminations had to be made, to connect the new tissue with the important nerve centers. All this takes time.

The cell is the smallest element of an organized body that manifests independent vital activity. It stands to reason that cells  $1/1000$  of a millimeter in size, cannot develop and divide and grow into an organism, such for

instance as a lung, without using up considerable time in the process. Accordingly when a hole in a lung is to be filled through the restoration of tissue, the process is essentially a time process, for it depends entirely upon the successive generation of cells. That is, the cell is formed, grows to maturity, and forms a third and fourth cell; and so the work continues, in a process that is of necessity a time-consuming process, until the hole in the lung is filled up.

An identical process takes place in the restoration of any other tissue, or to put it more broadly, all lesions are cured by this time-consuming cell-building process which is equivalent to saying that no organic diseases are ever cured suddenly by nature, but only after a lapse of considerable time.

The future of medicine opens up vistas of large promise. Much has been accomplished in the past; more will be done in the future. Research work is ever producing new remedies for the ills of mankind and yet we may say that science has only scratched the fields of discovery. Renewed effort will open wider veins of knowledge; persistent drive will unearth the buried secrets; and actual experiment will unite the results of effort and drive in healing balsams for the wounds of humanity.

But let the knowledge be surpassing, the secret most marvelous, the result most unexpected to which renewed effort, persistent drive and actual experiment will arrive in reality, and then add the progress pictured in the wildest flights of imagination and still there will be one vein of knowledge never opened by renewed effort, there will be one secret left unearthed by persistent drive, there will be one healing balsam denied to actual experiment;

and that one discovery for which renewed effort, persistent drive and actual experiment will ever toil for futilely is—the sudden cure of a lesion.

To the question why must this be so? the only answer is that other question, why must fire burn? It is the essence of things as they are now constituted. Nature is so framed that her own natural cure of a lesion demands the co-operation of time. For the growth of tissue can come only from the successive generation of cells. The cells themselves come from protoplasm, the protoplasm from other existing protoplasms. This succession of cell from cell, protoplasm from protoplasm, is nature's inexorable law; a law that every physiologist, biologist and medical man admits; a law that must become as evident to any thinking man as the proposition that fire burns is certain.

But to drive the meaning of this law of succession closer home, let us illustrate nature's process by a simple example. Suppose the teacher tells a child to count from one to ten in succession. The only possible way for the child to get from one to ten in succession is by counting out, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. I don't say the child might not get there by counting, as many of us did in early days, one, two, four, five, seven, nine, ten. But then we got to ten by skipping, not by succession. Absolutely the only way to get to ten by succession is through counting each individual number from one to ten.

Let us apply this simple example to nature. Suppose then there is a lesion, a hole in a lung, to fill which would require millions of cells. The only way nature generates cells is in succession. Therefore the only way nature can get these millions is by going through the process of

producing the cells successively. Nature never skips say, from one to three, or from three to five. For if she did, there would be a lacuna between one and three and three and five, so that as a matter of fact one cell would fail to come from another cell, a statement that does not square with nature's law in the matter.

What then would happen, if a natural agency were to effect a sudden cure in the instance of a lesion? Simply this: nature would not be nature any more. For the sudden cure of an organic lesion by a natural agency would mean the complete upheaval of the essential processes of life as we know them in the present creation. Granting for purposes of discussion, that future science may come so to know the unknown forces of nature, as to wrest from them an agency potent enough to effect an instantaneous cure of an organic lesion, we would be faced, even in that supposition, with an unnatural nature. Whatever the character of this unknown force of nature supposititiously known, it must, to bring about the restoration of an organic lesion, partake of the nature of a cell-building agency. There are two ways open then, for this supposititious cell-building agency to compass the instant cure of an organic lesion. For greater clearness, let the organic lesion be a punctured lung. In this instance, the cells necessary to fill the puncture would have to be generated by nature, under the stimulus of the supposititious agency, either simultaneously or in succession, but so rapidly as to approximate simultaneity. Of the two ways mentioned, either would suffice to explain the instantaneous cures that have place at Lourdes.

Taking up the first way, to wit, simultaneous generation of cells, we discover that simultaneous generation of cells is unthinkable, except in terms of the utter annih-

lation of existing nature. The fundamental principle running through all nature in her present creation is the principle of successive cell-generation. Science has proved to conclusiveness successive cell-generation and unhesitatingly confirms it, as a rock-ribbed law of nature. Accordingly there is not room for even the possibility of simultaneous cell-production, as an effect of this unknown force of nature. The very concept of simultaneity so excludes the concept of succession as to render the further consideration of an unknown force of nature producing cells simultaneously utterly futile.

We now turn ourselves to the investigation of the second method of effecting an instantaneous cure of an organic lesion, namely by way of successive cell-generation, but so rapidly as to approximate simultaneity. To its advantage, this method preserves the law of successive cell-generation but to its disadvantage destroys the time factor, an essential concomitant of all generation in nature. The time-consuming process of cell-feeding, cell-divisions, cell-arrangement, now progressive, must, under the stimulation of this unknown force of nature, become instantaneous. In one sense it must denaturalize nature.

To illustrate. Nature does not run to whims and caprices. Her course of action is law-locked and law-guarded. Anarchy is not brooked in her domain. Were a natural force to cure an organic lesion instantly, nature would be faced with anarchy in her own confines. For the law of life, ingrained in the very existence of nature, is the foundation fact that nature's cell-formation is progressive. All experience vividly demonstrates that progressive cell-formation takes time in nature. Accordingly progressive and time-taking are so identified in nature that to cure instantly is against nature.

Moreover if patient observation and age-long experiment have firmly established any deduction, it has been gathered in the law that nature functions in an uniform way. The application of this law of uniformity to the discussion in hand places the instant cure of an organic lesion outside the domain of nature, in so far as "instant" and "time-taking" are mutually exclusive. For as this cell-building agency would still be a natural force, it must follow the law of uniformity established in nature. Were it to contravene the law of uniformity in the manner of functioning in an organic lesion, nature would contradict herself. Or let us put this idea in another way. If this supposititious force were so to function in an organic lesion as to effect an instantaneous cure, the consequence would be, that a natural force would function in an unnatural way. It is not the way of nature to generate, nurture and bring to maturity nine successive generations in so many flickers of an eyelid. Yet were nine successive generations of cells required to fill a punctured lung, and that would be a moderate lesion, nature must under the stimulus of this supposititious cell-building agency essay the task in just such an unnatural way.

This theory carries with it absurdities enough to choke upon its own foolishness. For the size of the lesion conjures up spectacular feats that nature would be called upon to perform. In one instance, nature would be asked to generate a million cells successively but instantly; in another instance, nature would be requested to generate a billion cells successively but instantly; in a third instance, nature would be importuned to generate a trillion cells successively but instantly; for the number of cells required would depend upon the size of the lesion. Suppose this unknown cell-building agency could perform



after this fashion or, to be more generous, suppose that it performed in this manner not instantly but suddenly, in the commonly accepted meaning of that term, what a millenium for the panacea would be at our thresholds.

No more armless women or legless men. This supposititious cell-building agency would stimulate the cells about the stumps of arms or legs, suddenly to grow appendages at least as sightly as the artificial limbs now in use. And if nature could be so stimulated suddenly in an unhealthy individual why not in a healthy specimen? Why couldn't the thin lateral individual be transformed into a plump, well-rounded figure suddenly? Or why have little Tommie wait so many years to become a man? Why not cut out the years that span the gulf from childhood to manhood with a few injections of this tissue-producing agency and have the boy suddenly step across the threshold into man's estate? Or why die at all? Any breaking down of the system might be at once remedied by the sudden upbuilding of new tissue. Now when the consequences of such a supposititious remedy eliminate from life the possibility of death, then, for the Christian at least who hears in the words, "It is appointed unto all men once to die," the voice of Eternal Truth, there is no need of further comment on the futility of expecting such a panacea.

A panacea then of this kind is a chimera. Common-sense and common experience find against it. For while we do not know all that nature can do, we certainly are sure, from the law of her present creation, of some things she cannot do. And of one fact we are positive, to wit, that no natural agency ever has cured, or ever will or ever can cure an organic lesion suddenly.



## CHAPTER VI.

### By No Natural Agency

NO natural agency can ever cure an organic lesion suddenly is stating an absolutely incontrovertible fact. At Lourdes, organic lesions are cured suddenly is stating a second incontrovertible fact. But one fact gives the lie to the other fact and the result—shall it be called much ado about nothing? Hardly. Newman relates a quaint tale of combat between knights both bold and brave who fell to fighting over a question of facts. One stoutly affirmed that the shield in dispute was of gold; the other as roundly asserted, it was of silver. Therefore they spurred their chargers to the fray. But ere the issue was unto death, their positions were reversed, with the happy result, that each discovered the other correct. For the shield was gold on one side and silver on the reverse side.

When in the first instance it is laid down as an absolutely incontrovertible fact, that no natural agency can ever cure an organic lesion *suddenly*, and in the next breath it is asserted as a second incontrovertible fact, that organic lesions are cured *suddenly* at Lourdes, somehow the statements do smack of contradiction. But if we look closer as did the knights in the tale just told, we will discover something in the two statements, that changes the complexion of affairs very materially.

For there is a single word that puts a different face on the one side on the statement, that an organic lesion

can never be cured *suddenly* by a natural agency, and on the reverse side, that organic lesions are cured *suddenly* at Lourdes. That single word which saves the one statement from giving the lie to the other statement is the word "natural." To get a thorough understanding of this point, let us put the facts in the following order:

No natural agency can ever cure an organic lesion suddenly.

But at Lourdes organic lesions are cured suddenly.

Therefore at Lourdes organic lesions are cured by *no natural agency*.

Let none gainsay that conclusion without disloyalty to logic and to truth. Were a natural agency potent at Lourdes, the cures achieved therein would have to occur in a constant, determined, uniform way. For a natural agency, known or unknown, could do nought else but follow the laws of nature. The striking feature of nature's laws is their uniformity of action. At Lourdes the cures are absolutely devoid of this characteristic of uniformity. They fail utterly to eventuate in a constant determined uniform manner. They know no necessity. No one can ever say: "Who goes up to Lourdes must come down cured."

Again nature's laws require a precisely determined and unvarying set of conditions as a *sine qua non* of their action. In the presence of these conditions they cannot but act; in their absence they cannot but fail to act. Now the agency effective at Lourdes is independent in its action of all conditions and circumstances. Nothing in the condition of the disease, nothing in the condition of the patient, nothing in the condition of time or of place, nothing in the condition of soul or body, is required as an essential condition of action, on the part of this agency

at Lourdes. The disease may be of any nature, the patient of any age. Faith may be strong or faith may be weak. Prayers may be said or left unsaid. Multitudes may be at hand or crowds may be absent. Sun may be shining or rain be pouring. Place whatever sensible condition you may, it conjures up no obstacle to the action of the agency energizing at Lourdes. Or again have the most favorable conditions present: strong faith, ardent prayer, deepest confidence, utmost willingness to do ought that would induce a cure; place whatever sensible condition that might avail, still there is no guarantee that a cure will take place. Accordingly the deduction to which we are forced is that the agency effective at Lourdes is not a necessary but a free agent. Now what natural cell-building agency is a free agent? Therefore the conclusion stands that at Lourdes organic lesions are cured by no natural agency.

The second premise that at Lourdes organic lesions are cured *suddenly* is far beyond the reach of doubt. Beside the fact that we have given the testimony of eye-witnesses; beside the fact that the many who have been cured *suddenly* have come forward to attest their cure on oath; beside the fact that these cures have been subject to critical clinical examination, both before and after the cure was effected; beside the fact that there is not a single shred of evidence to prove collusion or "faking," there is this monumental fact: that no one ever calls into question the statement that at Lourdes organic lesions are cured suddenly. The world would laugh in his face and dub him a fool and bid him go and see for himself. Verily it is an absolute fact that at Lourdes organic lesions are cured suddenly and everybody conversant with the situation admits it.

The simplicity of the conclusion arrived at: that at Lourdes organic lesions are cured suddenly by no natural agency, comes forth in its native brilliancy, when attention is focused by placing the two emphatic ideas, "organic lesions" and "cured suddenly," in juxtaposition. "Organic lesions" limits the field of discussion to cell-building agencies; "cured suddenly" narrows the field to agencies that generate cells suddenly. The first excludes all maladies in which there is no lesion of the tissues; the second includes such agencies only as effect a cure within a brief period of time. The two phrases then, "organic lesion" and "cured suddenly," cut the very ground from under all functional, nervous and temperamental disorders, in fact they so simplify matters, that the play of psycho-therapeutics, subconscious suggestion, hypnotism, religious fervor and mob enthusiasm need not come up for consideration, in this discussion. For these agencies one and all may assist nature in the cure of an organic lesion but cannot change the natural time-period from slow to sudden. But we may go even a step further in excluding these agencies from the matter in hand. For Dr. Bernheim who is perhaps the world's leading exponent of psycho-therapeutics and the power of suggestion, unhesitatingly declares in his book entitled, "Hypnotism, Suggestion, Psycho-Therapy," that: "One can heal only that which is capable of being healed, suggestion cannot restore that which is destroyed."

With this conclusion firmly established, that at Lourdes organic lesions are cured suddenly by no natural agency, the only alternative left, when the question is asked, "How then are they cured?" is to respond: "By preternatural agency." All preternatural agencies may be grouped in general under the title of evil powers and

good powers together with the Eternal Godhead Himself. This classification may be further reduced, since good powers would of necessity act under the guidance and consent of the Divinity. For preternatural agents merit the title "good," in so far as their wills are in accord with the Divine Will and the title "bad," just so far as their wills are opposed to the Divine Will. For the practical purposes of discussion, then, we may say that the cures at Lourdes are brought about through the agency of evil powers or of God.

We can at once discount the agency of evil spirits, as a factor in the cures that take place at Lourdes. Man must be judged by his works, no less so spirits. The circumstances surrounding the cures at Lourdes are all morally good. They are worthy of God; they are sane, holy and becoming; there is absolutely no particular in the environment of the cures that could excite suspicion, no detail that is unworthy of the Divinity, nothing that is bad, nothing irrational, nothing evil, nothing unbecoming. In a word, there is nothing, verily nothing, at Lourdes that could warrant any prudent man, in forming his judgment to the effect, that the cures are wrought through the agency of evil spirits.

On the contrary, we may say unequivocally that everything at Lourdes justifies a prudent man in forming his judgment to the effect, that the cures are wrought through the agency of good powers or of the Divinity Itself. Now if the latter judgment were not true, men of sincerity and prudence would be deceived and deceived invincibly, since a Divine Providence could not allow evil agencies to work, where men have absolutely no chance to suspect that such agencies have been called

into play. Right reason demands that where evil agencies are at work, some circumstance should betray the cloven foot. Of the millions who have visited Lourdes, not one has gone on record with the claim, that here evil agencies are effecting cures.

Now when all is said—and so much more might be said in proof of the sincerity, the candor and scientific accuracy of all that takes place at Lourdes—there is still one outstanding fact that should convince the incredulous. It is this. There have been shrines in the past, Christian and pagan, at which we are told, cures have been wrought; there are shrines today, Christian and pagan, at which, so we are informed, cures are taking place; there are in our very midst the works of Spiritism and Christian Science. But what shrine of the past, whether Christian or pagan, or what abode of Spiritism or Christian Science, has had next door to it a Medical Bureau to test its cures impartially, to reject or accept them authentically on the basis of the scientific evidence which these same cures carry with them?

Here then, in the high light of the twentieth-century civilization, we have the striking contrast of religion and science meeting on the common ground of the shrine and the Medical Bureau of Lourdes. We have the astonishing fact of religion surrendering her cherished works of mercy, at the judgment seat of science, to have them dissected, torn apart, cast forth as frauds or accepted as genuine, as science and science alone dictates. A shrine devoted to religion, a Medical Bureau devoted to science, surely Lourdes has left no stone unturned in her effort to prove that she is neither fraud nor fake, but genuine to the core.

## CHAPTER VII.

# Science-Proof Miracles

THE sudden cure of an organic lesion is a process that goes beyond the powers of nature and can be explained only through some preternatural agency. I would like to call this process a miracle, since at Lourdes the preternatural agency is a good force. But there is so much aversion to the word miracle, that I hesitate. Miracles, you know, are a figment of the dim past; that is an *a priori* dictum of modern savants. So why run counter to their pronouncements? Is their position rational? Well, they reason somewhat as follows:

The thing called "a miracle," that is an extraordinary event, be that event outside or above the laws of nature, either physical, moral, or intellectual, has never eventuated in human experience or never will. It simply does not exist. We admit the thing is said to have had place; but, please, in the past, a past luminous only for the darkness of its intellect and the absence of research. So distant furthermore the miracles of the past, so credulous the mental outlook of their sponsors, so telling the progress of modern research, that the miracles of the past must be classed with the goblins, ghosts and gargoyles.

Wireless, aeroplanes and bath tubs would be miracles for the past, but mere necessities for the present. "Boy, page Mr. Miracle," is the witty response of the savant to the plea for miracles. What is called for is a miracle to order. A request is filled for a scientific specimen to



be examined, tested and judged on a scientific basis, with the light of modern research to play upon the experiment, with the scepticism, "the show-me" attitude of the present, to act the investigator, jury and judge. In the presence of such circumstances, truth and conviction relative to miracles is bright with the promise of attainment, in the absence of such environment, it is sombre with the shadows of a hope forlorn. Such tones seem to voice the attitude of savants of today towards miracles; a voice that but echoes the plaint of the distant past, "Give us a sign from heaven."

However, suppose—I wish to stress heartily the supposition—suppose, we could meet the demand of present-day savants for a miracle to order. Suppose, please note the supposition, suppose we could fulfil all the scientific conditions under which the miracle is to have place. Suppose—but to sheer off from generalities, let us confine ourselves at once to some particular cases. The first case shall be that of a man stone-blind, and that for years. Suppose the optic nerve has been destroyed. Suppose too that for years the patient has been under the care of a specialist. Every remedy that science knows or sympathy can suggest has been tried to no avail. Science pronounces the blindness incurable. The unfortunate victim must spend his days in darkness, cut off from the beauties of light, dead to the glories of sunshine. A pitiable case surely, yet how often it falls within the experience of each of us.

Or take the case of a consumptive. The disease is in its last stages. Specialists have been consulted. X-ray pictures of the lungs have been taken. The lesions in the lungs are clearly marked. Hemorrhages are frequent in occurrence: the cough is racking. Science labels the

case incurable. The only consolation in the patient's outlook is a quiet death amid the sympathetic ministrations that human love can offer. A sad case, yet how often met within our own experience.

Now suppose that in both these hopeless cases a sudden cure was effected. Sight was restored to the blind man and healthful lungs to the consumptive and that suddenly. But in the supposition of a sudden cure, let a further supposition suggest the circumstances. For instance, suppose the blind man were to say: "I prayed devoutly to God and then bathed my eyes in the waters of an ordinary spring. Suddenly I could see." And the consumptive: "I was fervent in prayer to God. Then I bathed in the waters of an ordinary spring and suddenly I felt the glow of health in my wasted frame."

This explanation was given, let us further suppose, by the two hopelessly incurables to the specialists who had pronounced their maladies absolutely beyond the reach of medical science. After the first shock of surprise, as scientific men, the specialists would bid their former incurables return for further examination. Suppose this were to continue for six months or a year or six years, till the permanency of the cure was put beyond cavil. In the meantime, suppose the waters of the spring were subjected to a rigid chemical analysis, with the result that they were pronounced to have no curative or health-giving properties.

But let us halt just here and ask ourselves, what we have on hand? The answer springs readily to the lips. We have on hand a supposed miracle; a miracle made to order, a miracle that scientific men might test, experiment upon and adjudge on its merits, either as a false or a true miracle. In this supposed miracle, there could

be no place for an *a priori* judgment; no *dictum* to the effect that miracles do not occur. For we have supposed a miracle made to order and that order a scientific one. We have supposed all the elements that science could demand in the making of a miracle. We have filled the scientific prescription for a miracle to the last iota. Nothing has been slurred over, nothing has been passed by, nothing has been omitted.

In this supposed miracle, all objectionable features have been removed. This supposed miracle has not occurred in the past but in the present; this supposed miracle has been fathered, not by the unscientific past but is the progeny of the scientific present; this supposed miracle is not witnessed by the credulous past but bears the scrutiny of the incredulous present; this supposed miracle is not the creation of the metaphysical past but the product of the practical present; this supposed miracle then is—everything that science could demand.

It is the result of accompanying research work; it is the product tested of the laboratory; it is dust-proof; it is hermetically sealed; it is labeled; it is classified, it is an invaluable specimen; it may be taken out, tested, examined; the data that belongs to it are the property of the scientific world and are patent to all who betray interest in the subject. In a word, this supposed miracle is the ideal miracle.

But there some one, who is always taking the joy out of life, objects: "Yes, it is the ideal miracle. Ideal is just the word to describe it. For it occurs only in the order of thought, takes place only in the disorder of imagination, and dwells only in the palaces of dreams and fantasies."

But hold, hold; what if this supposed miracle should suddenly drop the word "supposed," and emerge, not a supposed miracle, but an actual miracle? What if in every place in this chapter, in which the word "supposed" occurs, you read in the word "actual"? You would have to re-read this chapter, a tedious thing, which to avert, I will make this simple statement. If the chapter on faking, if the chapter on the Medical Bureau, if the chapter on the slowness of nature, if the chapter on the impossibility of a natural instantaneous cell-generation, if the chapter on the failure of naturally effecting a sudden cure of an organic lesion, warrant anything at all, they warrant this: that in every place in this chapter, in which the words "supposed miracle" appear, there, in that very place, I should read "actual miracle," when it comes to a question of Lourdes.

Within twenty-six years of its establishment, the Medical Bureau of Lourdes authenticated 3,350—read three-thousand three-hundred and fifty—cures. In this number are found 301 cures of pulmonary tuberculosis and 48 of blindness. Is it asking too much of a fair-minded man, to believe that out of that vast number of medically attested cures, at least *one* consumptive's lungs were healed and at least *one* blind man's vision was restored? That is the very minimum to be asked and granted. But that very minimum changes all that has been said of the "supposed miracle," into what must be said of the "actual miracle." If one out of that large number of cures medically attested and guaranteed, has occurred, then miracles step from the domain of supposition into the realm of actualities.

For that one miracle has all that science demands for its authentication. It occurs at Lourdes, an existing

town; it takes place in this present day of ours; it is witnessed by specialists; it is concerned with a disease, these same specialists pronounce incurable; it occurs suddenly, in the instance of a lesion; it has assured permanency, since examination has and can be had years after the cure was effected; it has taken place after prayer to God, by the application of the waters of an ordinary spring; these waters, after laboratory tests, have been pronounced to have no curative qualities; it occurs in the open day, frequently in the sight of thousands of people, without any suggestion of mystery or incantation or faking of any sort whatever; it is a clear, straightforward fact, that stands the glare of publicity, the search light of science, the X-ray of the clinic, with steadfast, unblinking eyes.

Upon the instantaneous cure of Mlle. Lucie Faure, from congenital disease of both hip joints, her physician, Dr. Lagasse, made this statement:

Neither the ordinary man nor the scholar of good faith can explain so extraordinary a thing by natural means. A mysterious supernatural interference was necessary for its accomplishment. The Fact existed, it still exists, it is daily visible to the whole world. I do not wish to deny the evidence. I see, I believe.<sup>20</sup>

Most of us see, but how many of us are willing to believe? Yet believe we must, if there is any truth in ourselves, in our fellow-men, or in science. The testimony for Lourdes is so complete, the witnesses are so many, the facts are so palpable, that only the man who deliberately blinds himself to the vision of truth, can dare to say "I am not convinced." Lourdes has out-scienced science, if I may use the term, in her desire to establish her miracul-

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<sup>20</sup> "Lourdes," Bertrin, p. 161.

ous cures on a purely scientific basis. Take the case of Mlle. Tulasne. She was cured at Lourdes, and cured instantaneously of Potts disease, on September 8, 1897, after suffering from the malady for twenty-seven months. Mr. G. Bertrin was invited and set himself to the task of establishing this cure on grounds purely scientific. Every French book written upon the subject of Potts disease during the last forty years he read assiduously. With unwearying patience he studied every symptom and investigated every fact connected with the malady. He then submitted his work to recognized authorities for criticism and judgment. It met with approval. In this book of 158 pages, devoted to this single case, we have the facts, their discussion and their proofs.

Briefly summarized the contents are these: Mlle. Jeanne Tulasne was suffering from Potts disease in a serious form. All the doctors who saw her, and they were numerous, were in full accord relative to her disease. In fact, so evident were the symptoms that no doubt was possible. Since her cure at Lourdes, September 8, 1897, she has been in good health. Her cure was unique in that it was instantaneous, lasting, free from the slightest trace of her former malady. These facts are palpable. For proof, we have the names of the physicians, their certificates and their reports. And last of all two photographs, face to face. One an X-ray of Mlle. Tulasne, after her instantaneous cure at Lourdes, the other, a picture of a natural cure of the same disease. The contrast is most striking and carries such vivid proof of more than a mere natural agency that a glance convinces one of its verity.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cf *Etudes* Tome 119, pp. 131.

In view of this patient toilsome work, ultra-modern in scope and method, scientifically accurate to the last detail, there is one subterfuge left for disbelief in Lourdes and her works, to wit the silly attitude expressed in: "I see, I believe not, because I do not wish to believe."



## CHAPTER VIII.

# The Immaculate Conception

**D**ECEMBER 8, 1854, marked the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mother of God. We define, said Pope Pius IX, that:

The doctrine which declares the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted to her by Almighty God, through the merits of Christ Jesus, Saviour of mankind, was preserved from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore must be held firmly and constantly by all Christians.<sup>22</sup>

From the non-Catholic world, a storm of protest followed upon this definition. Rome had foisted on the Christian world a new dogma. She had sinned against the primitive traditions of Christianity by adding to the ancient Faith, novelties of her own coining. Not that the minting of novel doctrine was regarded as the point wherein Romish error lurked; but rather was her mistake in thinking that an enlightened century would accept that with which darker ages had more than once been duped. Rome had pitted ancient credulity against modern incredulity and in such wise had sounded the tocsin of her doom. To some extent, this approximates the indictment which men brought against the Church of Rome upon her definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception. For the moment we will allow this arraignment to stand without further disclaimer.

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<sup>22</sup> Denzinger, 1641.

In the year 1858, something disturbing occurred. Remarkable cures were reported from a small town in the Pyrenees, called Lourdes. Though disturbing, these reported cures were pooh-poohed. But strange to say, pooh-poohing did not prevent the repetition of these cures. So remarkable were these cures, so frequent their occurrence, so preternatural in character, that the scientific world paused, became interested, and launched an investigation. A Medical Bureau was established at Lourdes, in the year 1882. The work accomplished by this Medical Bureau has already been spoken of in these pages.

Now what is the connecting link between the definition of the Immaculate Conception and the cures authenticated at Lourdes? That is a very natural query. December 8, 1854, Pius IX<sup>i</sup> declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception revealed of God. Men smiled. In 1858, amazing cures were reported at Lourdes. Men frowned. For these amazing cures occurred in a place now dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of "The Immaculate Conception." Put these two facts together. In 1854, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is declared an article of faith, binding upon the Christian world. In 1858, four years later, amazing cures are reported and still continue to be reported, from Lourdes; cures that take place through the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, cures that can be explained only through the preternatural agency of God. Look the two facts full in the face; spare them a few minutes consideration, and you will be forced at least to exclaim, "What a remarkable coincidence."

But there is here more than mere coincidence. A claim has been set up by Pius IX, that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was revealed of God. Protestant Christianity, as a body, denied that claim. Pius IX asserted the doctrine was to be firmly held, by all faithful Christians; Protestant Christianity, as a body, maintained that it was to be peremptorily rejected by all sincere believers. Pius IX declared that it was a traditional doctrine of the ancient Faith; Protestant Christianity stated that it was a novelty grafted upon the primitive traditions. The issue then is clearly marked; the question is one of falsehood or of truth; the line of demarkation is evident and emphatic; the choice must be single-hearted; acceptance on the one hand that is absolute, rejection on the other that is supreme.

But is there any guide-post along the way, to point the sincere seeker the path to truth and warn him off the road to falsehood? There is. The question at issue is not merely one of truth and falsehood; there is another phase that is more important far. Eternal salvation is at stake; eternal damnation enters into the issue. There is no place here for equivocation. Simply, solemnly, sternly, Pius IX declared that they who hold differently from what has been defined, have made shipwreck of their faith.<sup>28</sup> Now call it what one will, courageousness or temerity, as lie one's sentiments, there is no disguising this fact at least, that the question of accepting the definition or of rejecting it, is on the one hand bound up with eternal salvation and on the other hand, with eternal damnation.

There are those who may cry out against such an assumption of authority on the part of Pius IX; still that

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<sup>28</sup> Denzinger, 1641.

protest, however long and loud, does not change the fact that he has identified the Definition with eternal loss and eternal gain. There is no apology here, for his right, so to identify the Immaculate Conception with salvation or damnation; his right so to do, is a question different far, from the fact that he has so done. What is to be stressed and emphasized and dwelt upon, is the actual fact, that he has identified the two issues. In the face of the whole world, Pius IX has set up the claim, that the acceptance of the Immaculate Conception or its rejection, is a matter intimately bound up with eternal salvation.

The issues of eternity are in the hands of God. His part it is to decide them. No truer statement has ever been made. But there we cannot rest the case. A claim has been set up, that the acceptance of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is binding upon the Christian conscience; that a grave obligation rests upon the Christian world, of believing in it; that the rejection of the doctrine bears with it the guilt of serious sin; that the doctrine itself is revealed by God. In the face of such a bold, emphatic, unequivocal claim, could we in the wildest flights of imagination, even for a moment, conceive that a Divine Providence could possibly allow the sudden cure of an organic lesion to occur, a cure that has no other explanation, but preternatural—could we, I repeat, even conceive that such a cure would be allowed to have place—and mark this: through the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, unless the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was all that Pius IX claimed for it, a truth in verity revealed of God?

Sincerely, candidly, openly, I do not see how an all-truthful God could allow preternatural cures to take

place, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, if that same Immaculate Conception were a falsehood. And yet in the circumstances, such as we know them at Lourdes, where *sudden* cures occur that can be explained only through some Divine Agency, what other conclusion can we draw but that All-Truth has a direct relation to falsehood, that All-Truth has placed the color of verity on a falsehood, that All-Truth has shielded deception, in allowing such cures to take place, under the invocation and title of the Immaculate Conception, if such an invocation and title is a falsehood?

All-Truth may not allow men to be invincibly deceived and remain All-Truth. Yet what have we here but invincible deception, if All-Truth wrought preternatural cures under a false title and invocation? In other words: If to predicate an Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is to predicate a falsehood, and yet under the predication of the Immaculate Conception a Divine Agency is working preternatural cures, then a Divine Agency is working preternatural cures under a falsehood. No man who believes that there is an All-True God will credit that conclusion. The only alternative left us, therefore, is the conclusion that the preternatural cures at Lourdes are a ratification of the truth of the Immaculate Conception.

## CHAPTER IX.

# Proof of an Infallible Church

**A** BLESSED institution is the modern telephone, though at odd times, its portion has been a malediction. But in trouble, there is always a last resort. "Central, give me Information," is a cry that has stayed the hand which would have mercilessly cut us off. And Information has done the office of a Good Samaritan to many, before switching off the line. So here prior to switching off the line of our previous argument, Information may play the Good Samaritan to many, in a bright suggestion that came floating by, as connections were made between this and the preceeding chapter.

"Would you like to belong to an infallible Church?" A question came over the line, but surely too, a suggestion. Would you like to belong to a Church, that is never wrong in a matter of faith and morals? Would you like to belong to a Church that is never mistaken, when it says, this doctrine is revealed, that doctrine is not revealed? Would you like to belong to a Church that never errs, when it says, this act is moral, that act is immoral? And I answer: "Certainly I would like to belong to such a Church. Candidly I am lost in a quagmire of doubts and difficulties. I hear science deny what religion affirms. I see earnest men of one faith own what earnest men of another faith disown. I listen and experts on one side attack what experts on the other side defend. Who am I to choose, neither scientist that I am, nor theologian nor expert, coming as I do to the choice,

with earnestness for my sole guidance? Would I like to belong to an infallible Church? Would a wayfarer floundering in the depths of the night, appreciate the dawning of the day?"

Now there is light in the offing, as we look again at the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and Lourdes. This Definition of the Immaculate Conception was called infallible. Pius IX with supreme authority, resting on the Infallibility of the Church of Christ, defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as revealed of God. That is, with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX went before the world standing on the proposition, that his utterances on the subject were the dicta of an infallible Church. Would you like to belong to an infallible Church? Here at least is a Church that puts forth a claim to Infallibility.

Of course there is a wide difference between a claim to Infallibility and its actual possession. Does Lourdes in her work prove that Rome possesses Infallibility? We answer in the affirmative. The reasons are as simple as they are convincing. They focus themselves about the question of Revelation. Rome declared the Immaculate Conception a revealed doctrine. This Rome did in as much as she claimed and believed herself infallible in defining what was and what was not revealed doctrine. Rome does not reveal doctrine. God alone reveals in the technical sense. But should controversy arise as to whether a doctrine is of revelation or not, Rome, exercising her so-called prerogative of infallibility, adjudicates the dispute once and for all.

Let us take up the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as a case in point. Within the Church itself dispute arose as to whether the Immaculate Conception was



a pious belief or a doctrine of revealed religion. Pius IX decided the controversy in a very definite way. He declared and declared infallibly that the Immaculate Conception was revealed of God. Thereafter all controversy in the Catholic Church was hushed. The dicta of Pius IX on the subject were received as an infallible utterance which left no room for doubt or further questioning.

But not so with the Protestant Christian world. There may be individual Protestants who accept the Immaculate Conception as a revealed truth. But no Protestant body, as a corporate whole, has ever received it as revealed doctrine. In consequence of these counter-claims centering around the revealed character of the doctrine, that phase of the dogma becomes the all-important consideration in any advance toward conviction and belief in Roman Infallibility. For Roman Infallibility is so intimately linked with the revealed character of the doctrine that we may say without exaggeration, Rome's Infallibility stands or falls with the truth or falsehood of her own statement—that the dogma was revealed of God.

To bring out in full light the dependence of the Roman claim to Infallibility, in this instance, upon the substantiation of the truth of the revealed character of the Immaculate Conception, we will take up for consideration the factors that enter into the relationship of Infallibility to Revelation anent the present subject. First of all, the manifestation to the world of the revealed character of the Immaculate Conception depended on the so-called infallible Definition of Rome. This Definition it was that brought to the consciousness of the whole Christian world, the claim that the Immaculate Conception belonged, in its own right, to the body of truth revealed of God.

But above and beyond this, the so-called infallible Definition of Rome placed upon the Christian world the duty of making an act of faith in the Immaculate Conception as a revealed truth. Prior to any obligation to an act of faith in a revealed truth, there are certain prerequisites that must be positively established. Revelation is popularly known as God's word. We believe in God's word because of the authority of God who reveals it. Accordingly men must be certain of the fact that God has spoken antecedent to believing in what God has spoken. With the assurance that God has spoken, men can make an act of faith in the content of God's word, since God cannot speak falsehood and remain God.

Applying this principle to an act of faith in the Immaculate Conception, we state that we believe in the Immaculate Conception because of the authority of God who has revealed it. But where do we obtain certitude that God has revealed the Immaculate Conception? That certitude springs from the fact that Rome has spoken unerringly in her so-called infallible definition, "that the Immaculate Conception was revealed of God." On the issue then that the Catholic Church has spoken infallibly, are we certain that God has revealed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Accordingly it is evident that the Roman claim to Infallibility stands or falls with the truth or falsehood of the revealed character of the Immaculate Conception.

But here comes a startling query. What if God were to intervene? What if God were to make manifest whether He had revealed the Immaculate Conception or no? Then in what position would the Definition place the Godhead? Divine Providence is free to intervene or hold aloof in the issue at stake. There is no compulsion

for any intervention on the part of Divine Providence. But were Divine Providence to intervene in favor of the Immaculate Conception as a revealed doctrine, then the position in which the Definition places Divine Providence is this. If you intervene in favor of the Immaculate Conception as a revealed doctrine, you likewise intervene in favor of Roman Infallibility through which the revealed character of the doctrine was manifested to the whole world, through which the world was made certain that the dogma was a revealed doctrine, through which the obligation of making an act of faith in the doctrine as revealed of God, was placed upon the world under pain of grievous sin.

It may well be questioned, whether this conception of the position of Divine Providence, relative to the controversy, is a forced one or whether men at large grasped the significance of a Providential intervention in the question at issue? Men understood. Of that there can be no doubt. For Pius IX made it clear to evidence that he proposed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as an infallible utterance.

The supreme teaching authority of the Church of Christ was invoked in its enunciation. The technical terms "on the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, we declare, pronounce and define," manifest the clear intention of the Pontiff. The Definition was a matter of Faith, hence within the providence of Infallibility; the truth was declared to belong to the Revelation of God. hence of the subject matter for infallible utterance; belief in the dogma was made obligatory upon all the Faithful, hence the hall-mark of Infallibility was set upon the Definition. No church would even dare bind men to belief, under a grave obligation of

conscience, unless she at least set up a claim to Infallibility. The issue then of Infallibility was put before the world in a clear, simple but emphatic way. The world understood. It replied that the Church arrogated to herself an Infallibility for which she had no warrant. She took for granted what she must prove she possesses. Time would show the futility of her pretensions.

It was therefore a test case of Roman Infallibility. If the Immaculate Conception was not a revealed doctrine, as Protestant Christianity generally maintained, then Roman Infallibility went by the board. If the Immaculate Conception were a revealed doctrine, as Pius IX infallibly so declared, then Roman Infallibility in this instance was vindicated. Now it is this series of circumstances that makes the position of Divine Providence in the matter to be this: You cannot intervene in favor of the truth of the Immaculate Conception as a revealed doctrine without, at one and the same time, intervening in favor of the truth of the Infallibility of Rome.

But Divine Providence has intervened not once but often. The miracles of Lourdes wrought under the title and invocation of the Immaculate Conception are proof abundant that the Immaculate Conception is a revealed doctrine. For the very title "Immaculate Conception" has meaning only in terms of Revelation. It signifies exemption from that original sin in which all descendants of Adam are conceived. Now this inherited sinful condition of mankind is known only from Revelation. Accordingly an exemption from this general law can be known only through the same Revelation. For the exemption is dependent on God's free will. But God's free will in the matter, we cannot deduce from argument. It must be made manifest to us through His Revelation.

As a consequence then "Immaculate Conception" and Revelation are in this sense synonymous.

Let it be noted moreover that the *miraculés*, with an act of faith in the revealed character of the doctrine, invoke Mary's aid under this same title. What follows? Simply this: A Divine Agency has wrought miracles and is effecting them today under a fictitious title and false invocation, unless the Immaculate Conception is a revealed truth. Regarded in this light, Lourdes and her miracles can do nought else but proclaim the Immaculate Conception a revealed doctrine.

But let us recall that with the truth or falsehood of the revealed character of the doctrine, Rome's infallibility stood or fell. Pius IX infallibly declared the Immaculate Conception "was revealed of God." We have seen that the circumstances, which environ this so-called infallible utterance of Pius IX, place Divine Providence in this position: You cannot intervene in favor of the Immaculate Conception as a revealed truth without intervening, at one and the same time, in favor of the truth of the Infallibility of Rome. Yet Divine Providence, by way of miracles wrought at Lourdes, has intervened in favor of the Immaculate Conception as a revealed truth. What alternative then is left us, if we are honest and loyal to our own reason, but to affirm that Divine Providence has intervened in favor of Rome's Infallibility.

It would hardly be an overstatement of facts to maintain these two points: First that prior to the occurrence at Lourdes, men at large would agree that any Providential intervention in favor of the revealed character of the Immaculate Conception must be interpreted in favor

of Roman Infallibility. For Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception was revealed of God, because of the God-given Infallibility of his Papal office. Second, that men even now who are unacquainted with Lourdes, would acquiesce in that same view of the matter. Where is there any consistency in refusing to accept, after the occurrences of Lourdes, and after acquaintance with the Providential intervention at Lourdes, that conclusion which was inevitably clear, prior to a Providential intervention? Fair dealing with the facts can issue only in conviction of the Infallibility of the Church of Rome.

## CHAPTER X.

# God's Testimony to His Church

**I**N theory religion should have mothered peace; in fact religion appears to have fathered war. The quarrel over religion has been incessant. For centuries though the religious strife has been narrowing, until today, it centers about the Catholic Church. Men there are and have been who claim that the Catholic Church is the one true and genuine Church of God. Men there are and have been who assert that the Catholic Church is the false and counterfeit Church of God. So that the quarrel at present in large measure is summed up thus: Is the Catholic Church the only Church of God on earth?

Now it is evident this question must be answered by God Himself. Man's word cannot be final in the issues of God. It is not man's church but God's church over which the controversy has place. The Catholic Church steps forward and says, "I am God's church and God's only church." The world steps forward and says, "You are not God's church, much less are you God's only church."

The simplest way of settling such a quarrel once and for all is to have the party in question, give his testimony. Should for instance one man assert, that a certain house belonged to the President of the United States and another man deny the same, the simplest way out, would be to have the testimony of the President to his ownership or non-ownership. Were the President to testify in



truth, that the house belonged to him and that the house in dispute was the only house he ever owned, the fight would be over, settled finally once and for all.

Let us see if we can apply this simple and final method of settlement to the dispute before us, to wit: is the Catholic Church God's own church and His only church? Could we, and let us say it with all due respect, get God to testify in the case, the quarrel would be done with, one way or the other, and finally done with. But there is the rub. Can we get God to testify? Can we get God, and this be it said reverently, to stand forth and say either, "the Catholic Church is not My church," or "the Catholic Church is My church and My only church on earth"?

We can get God so to testify. In His strength, He stoops to our weakness today, no less so than He did in times that are older. God's testimony is clear, God's testimony is explicit. God's testimony is emphatic. And after His testimony the question is closed for the mind open to truth.

We have seen that at Lourdes, organic lesions are cured—suddenly; that the sudden cure of an organic lesion is completely beyond the reach of nature's laws; that accordingly a sudden cure of an organic lesion requires a Divine Agency to achieve it. At Lourdes therefore a Divine Agency is potent which must be either the good powers of the spirit world or God Himself. But whatever one, we may say, of these forces is at work, ultimately, since the controlling factor is the Divine Will, ultimately, we must say, that the works wrought at Lourdes are the works of God.

Common-sense dictates that the works of God are not meaningless. They must have some significance. Com-

mon-sense too demands that a more emphatic signification be attached to the works of God which are beyond the laws of nature. The works of God therefore that transcend the range of nature's laws, signify God's intention. They are an expression of His mind. Should these same works be executed to confirm the truth of some doctrine or church, they would constitute the testimony of God, to the verity of that doctrine or church.

Now in what sense do the supernatural works of Lourdes witness the testimony of God, to the verity of the doctrine and to the truth of the Catholic Church? For reply, let us take up the common charges in the indictment returned against the Catholic position in general. Take the matter of the Blessed Virgin. In plain terms, the Catholic Church is taxed with making a goddess of the Blessed Mother; the Church is reproached with rendering her the honors due to God. The Catholic Church is idolatrous because it adores a human creature. Take the matter of the Lord's Supper. The Catholic Church adores Christ under the species of bread and wine. The Catholic Church is idolatrous because it adores inanimate creatures. Again Mass is a mummary, confession an abomination; the whole Catholic system a blight on progress. Untold thousands not to say millions believe either whole-heartedly or half-heartedly these charges. And to put it mildly the attitude of millions is suspicious.

Let us now turn ourselves to the facts of Lourdes. Lourdes with all its wonderful works is part and parcel of the Catholic Church. The Catholic atmosphere permeates Lourdes; the Catholic Church holds it in its grasp. It was discovered by Catholics; it was developed by Catholics; it is now under the auspices of Catholics. It is dedicated to that same Blessed Virgin to whom Catholics

are said to pay Divine honors. It is traversed by processions of the Eucharist whose cult is said to make Catholics idolatrous. Its shrines hold altars where Mass, the mummerly of Catholics, is celebrated daily. In it too the confessions of thousands are heard. The whole suspicious Catholic system is wrapped up and around Lourdes in such wise that Lourdes and her works, if nothing else, are Catholic to the core.

And then comes the striking fact, that at Lourdes, in the midst of the "baneful" Catholic system, a Divine Agency is at work. The works wrought by this Divine Agency are engulfed, literally engulfed in the prayers, practices, penances, processions, ceremonies of the Catholic system in such a way that one cannot be separated from the other. What can we conclude from this, but that the works of the Divine Agency at Lourdes are a proof of the verity of the Catholic Church and a reproof of the indictment brought against her. Does a Divine Agency act under the banner of deceit and the treachery of falsehood?

There are millions who credit the indictment brought against the Catholic Church. If there is a Divine Providence, these millions must be preserved from invincible deception on the part of God Himself in a matter of salvation. If the indictment they hold against the Catholic Church is true, can a Divine Providence be said to be preserving these millions from deception, when cures that must be laid at the door of a Divine Agency are allowed to take place, at the instance of the prayers, practices, penances, processions, ceremonies of that same Church, those millions hold to be the mother of error?

There are millions who believe in the Catholic Church. If there is a Divine Providence, those millions must be

preserved from invincible deception on the part of God Himself in a matter of salvation. If their belief in the Catholic Church is an error, can a Divine Providence be said to be preserving those millions from deception when cures explainable only through a Divine Agency, are allowed to have place, at the instance of the prayers, penances, practices, processions, ceremonies of that same erroneous church, those millions hold to be the Mother of Truth?

The least we can say of the works of Lourdes is that these preternatural effects are a heavenly confirmation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. But if they are a heavenly confirmation of this one doctrine, they are a heavenly confirmation of all the doctrines of the Catholic Church which enter into an indissoluble union with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Such for instance is the doctrine of original sin and its transmission, in the wake of which follow so many other vital doctrines of the Catholic Church. Suppose the Catholic Church were an heretical church, that is a church which is not God's own church. We would be faced with the anomaly of God ratifying, by preternatural marvels, a doctrine taught in an heretical church, a doctrine moreover indissolubly joined with other heretical doctrines of that same heretical church. What an impossible situation! Prudent men would be deceived. An All-True God would be associating Himself with falsehood.

Let us follow this line of thought in its bearings upon the doctrine of Infallibility. We have seen that the works of Lourdes in substantiating the revealed character of the Immaculate Conception just so far forth sustain the truth of the Infallibility of the Catholic Church. If

then the Catholic Church is infallible in defining one revealed doctrine, why not in defining all revealed doctrine? The query is a pertinent one. For the Catholic Church has at least this one thing to her credit, she is consistent. She has never claimed to be infallible in defining one doctrine and fallible in defining another. Infallibility in defining all revealed doctrine is a prerogative she claims to possess.

The consequence is that as the works of Lourdes are a guarantee of her Infallibility in one definition, they must be a guarantee of her Infallibility in all definitions of revealed truth. For her position before the world, in defining the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was this: "I am infallible in defining all doctrine or not infallible in defining any doctrine. I have the courage to stand before all men and lay a binding obligation upon their consciences, because I am infallible in defining all revealed doctrine." This claim of the Catholic Church was clear and outspoken. There was not the slightest chance for a misunderstanding.

Humanly speaking the Church said to God: "I state beforehand that support given to any part of my claim, will be interpreted as support given to the whole of my claim to Infallibility in defining revealed doctrine. Such is my position before the world and so is it understood by men." How then can the preternatural works of Lourdes, supporting as they do the claim to infallibility in defining the Immaculate Conception, be interpreted in any other light than that of supporting the whole claim of the Catholic Church to Infallibility in defining all revealed doctrine? And this the more so, as there was no need of any Providential intervention, since Infalli-

bility has on other grounds strong and convincing proofs at its command.

Would you like to belong to an infallible Church? Would a wayfarer floundering in the depths of the night appreciate the dawning of the day? Well, then, the answer is easy: Join the Catholic Church.



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